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Claims:

1. An image data processing device for processing an input image content data to produce an output image content data, comprising:

5 a detector for detecting a permission limiting watermark from the input image content data; and

a controller for controlling transferring and blocking of the input image content data such that the output image content data is produced from the input image content data a limited number of times when the permission limiting watermark  
10 is detected.

2. The image data processing device according to claim 1, wherein the limited number of times is determined by the permission limiting watermark.

3. The image data processing device according to  
15 claim 2, wherein the input image content data is inputted when a copy is performed.

4. The image data processing device according to claim 3, wherein the permission limiting watermark is a copy-once watermark indicating that a copy is permitted only once.

5. The image data processing device according to claim 1, further comprising:

an additional watermark inserter for inserting an addition watermark in the input image content data to produce the output image content data when the copy is performed.

6. The image data processing device according to claim 5, wherein the controller comprises:

an additional watermark detector for detecting the additional watermark from the input image content data,

wherein, when the additional watermark is detected from the input image content data, the controller blocks the transfer of the input image content data so as not to produce the output image content data.

7. The image data processing device according to claim 5, wherein the additional watermark inserter blocks the transfer of the input image content data under control of the controller when the additional watermark is detected.

8. An image data processing device for processing an input image content data to produce an output image content data, comprising:

a first detector for detecting a permission limiting watermark from the input image content data;

a second detector for detecting an additional watermark from the input image content data, wherein the additional watermark is inserted when an original image content is copied; and

5 a controller for producing the output image content data from the input image content data when the permission limiting watermark and the additional watermark are both detected and prohibiting production of the output image content data when the permission limiting watermark is detected  
10 and the additional watermark is not detected.

9. The image data processing device according to claim 8, wherein the input image content data is inputted when playback is performed.

10. The image data processing device according to  
15 claim 8, further comprising:

a third detector for detecting a type of a medium storing the input image content data,

wherein,

when the medium is writable, the controller produces the  
20 output image content data from the input image content data when the permission limiting watermark and the additional watermark are both detected and prohibits production of the output image content data when the permission limiting watermark is detected and the additional watermark is not detected,

when the medium is not writable, the controller unconditionally produces the output image content data from the input image content data.

11. The image data processing device according to claim 1, wherein the input image content data is compressed image data conforming to MPEG standard.

12. The image data processing device according to claim 8, wherein the input image content data is compressed image data conforming to MPEG standard.

13. The image data processing device according to claim 1, wherein the input image content data is digital image data corresponding to an analog composite signal.

14. The image data processing device according to claim 8, wherein the input image content data is digital image data corresponding to an analog composite signal.

15. A copy permission method comprising the steps of:  
determining whether a permission limiting watermark is embedded in input image content data, wherein the permission limiting watermark provides a predetermined number of copying times; and

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when the permission limiting watermark is detected,  
permitting a copy of image content data the predetermined number  
of copying times.

16. The copy permission method according to claim 15,  
5 further comprising the step of:

when a copy is performed, inserting an addition  
watermark in input image content data to produce output image  
content data.

17. The copy permission method according to claim 16,  
10 further comprising the steps of:

determining whether the additional watermark is  
embedded in the input image content data; and

when the additional watermark is detected from the  
input image content data, blocking the transfer of the input  
15 image content data to prohibit the copy.

18. A playback permission method comprising the steps  
of:

determining whether a permission limiting  
watermark is embedded in image content data stored in a medium;

20 determining whether an additional watermark is  
embedded in the image content data, wherein the additional  
watermark is inserted when the image content data is copied;

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when the permission limiting watermark and the additional watermark are both detected, permitting playback of the image content data; and

when the permission limiting watermark is detected  
5 and the additional watermark is not detected, prohibiting playback of the image content data.

19. The playback permission method according to claim 18, further comprising the steps of:

detecting a type of a medium storing the image  
10 content;

when the medium is writable,

permitting playback of the image content when the permission limiting watermark and the additional watermark are both detected; and

15 prohibiting playback of the image content when the permission limiting watermark is detected and the additional watermark is not detected; and

when the medium is not writable, unconditionally permitting playback of the image content.